

**TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN EMERGENT TECHNOLOGIES AND MEDIA ART  
PRACTICES AT UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER**

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**I. SUMMARY**

This item recommends approval for University of Colorado Boulder (UCB) to offer a Doctor of Philosophy Emergent Technologies and Media Art Practices.

**II. BACKGROUND**

**COMMISSION AUTHORITY**

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review and approval of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is defined in §23-5-129(6)(b), which states that new and modified program proposals shall be reviewed and approved only on the basis of fit with the institution's statutory role and mission.

**III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

**OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM**

The following is summarized from UCB's proposal:

The Emergent Technologies and Media Arts Practices (ETMAP) Ph.D. is a practice directed program of scholarly research into new media practices, theories, and innovations in art and technology. By "practice-directed" we mean that students both experiment with and research the media and artistic practices that they study. The ultimate goal is a scholarly dissertation advancing knowledge about media arts practice that is informed by the creative and scholarly projects that students do in their coursework. A student's dissertation will be a contribution to innovative scholarship and will situate his or her scholarship and that of others within broad cultural and historical contexts, thereby charting new paths not only for research but also for artistic practices. It is designed to meet the academic and professional arts challenges of the twenty-first century.

New technology is creating exciting and revolutionary practices and exchanges among artists and art forms. Many of these new developments have greatly enhanced the collaborative potential of people working in virtual environments across great

distances. The workflow for many new-media scholars from diverse backgrounds now includes file sharing with editors and artists from around the world. The multimedia capabilities of computers (including laptops, tablets, and hand-held devices) have placed powerful tools within the reach of both scholars and artists. This new world brings with it hybrid forms of art and interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary ways for scholars and artists to work and to work together. We need not just a general grasp but also an advanced understanding at the doctoral level of these developments against a background at once technical, cultural, and historical.

In the past decade, interdisciplinary study proliferated as a reaction to narrow disciplinary restrictions in the humanities. As a result, an increasing number of universities are embracing an interdisciplinary approach to graduate studies and curriculum development. This interdisciplinary approach is particularly applicable to art and technology studies. The merging of digital technology with the arts – from performance-based arts to visual media – has created new possibilities for scholars and artists to collaborate and has prompted new uses for emergent technologies. Significant new understandings have developed. These include new theories of the artistic process itself, reexaminations of viewership and audience in a networked world, explorations of the lexicon of expression and communication emerging from new artistic practices, interactions of the global and the local within new practices, as well as topics and areas of study as yet unanticipated but that will arrive and develop just as swiftly as new technology itself arrives and changes. Successful media art leadership and innovation in this century will be predicated on the preparation of those who will be able to flexibly navigate the theory and practice of media art and technology from an interdisciplinary perspective. The PhD in Emergent Technologies and Media Art Practices would, therefore, address this need.

Additional information on this proposed degree, unrelated to fit with statutory role and mission, is in Appendix A.

## **ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT**

This degree supports UCB's statutory role and mission, which states:

*(a) The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall be a comprehensive graduate research university with selective admission standards. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado shall offer a comprehensive array of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. The Boulder campus of the university of Colorado has exclusive authority to offer graduate programs in law. The Colorado commission on higher education, in consultation with the board of regents, shall designate those graduate level programs that are the primary responsibility of the Boulder campus of the university of Colorado. The university has the responsibility to provide on a statewide basis, utilizing when possible and appropriate the faculty and facilities of other educational institutions, those graduate*

*level programs. The commission shall include in its funding recommendations a level of general fund support for these programs. [§ 23-20-101, C.R.S.]*

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that UCB's proposed degree is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. University of Colorado's Board of Regents approved the program at its September 11, 2014 meeting.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends that the Commission approve University of Colorado Boulder's proposals to offer a Doctor of Philosophy in Emergent Technologies and Media Art Practices.**

#### **STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

C.R.S. §23-5-129 Governing boards - performance contract - authorization – operations

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education:

(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create, modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.

#### **APPENDIX:**

Appendix A: Supplemental Information

## **APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

This supplemental information is unrelated to the proposed degrees' fit with the institution's statutory role and mission. The following is summarized from the institution's proposal:

### **EVIDENCE OF NEED**

**Employer Demand:** The advent of globalization and media arts as a force in the shaping of cultures, information and entertainment industries implies that future scholars and art practitioners must develop fresh approaches to critical scholarship, pedagogy, and art practices. In this technology-driven century, successful intellectual innovation will be accomplished by those who can navigate both theory and practice from an interdisciplinary perspective. The ETMAP PhD will create such innovators by facilitating interdisciplinary research in diverse but ever-more-closely integrated fields such as art and art history, media studies, cinema studies, performance studies and the application of computational tools to art and design. Our students will not wait until they "graduate" to innovate. Their course of study will require innovation and new insight in every class, on every project, and, as a capstone, in the dissertation.

Graduates from this program will have opportunities to work in fields such as professional theater design, museum exhibition design, music, independent art practice, education and research, video, film, interactive media, engineering, network media, robotics, installation, animation, and performance. As such graduates can pursue careers as sound designers, media producers, directors, editors, cinematographers, and postproduction specialists. The program is, therefore, useful to a variety of fields and careers. These include —entertainment industries, media/multi-platform entrepreneurs, museum education, music production, private/non-profit research labs, digital production, software corporations, and virtual museum/archive.

**Student Demand:** This interdisciplinary PhD will draw upon students from such fields as art and art history, media studies, cinema studies, visual anthropology, cultural geography, performance studies digital art and design, and, potentially, many others. Each proposed track of study and of research/creative work will be rigorously examined in light of its promise as a significant contribution to knowledge. The threads uniting the various disciplines on which we will draw are their application of new media technologies and their research into how these technologies are reconfiguring creativity and scholarship. Most importantly, the program is committed to building an inventive interdisciplinary curriculum through institutional collaboration, research, creative work and teaching.

Thus, student demand is limited only by the number of fields that the program will combine and integrate. Due to the flexibility this affords, we anticipate that students already holding masters degrees will find this program extremely attractive. Our program will appeal to any student who aspires to a profession involving new-media research and creativity; and

nowadays there is hardly a profession that does not so aspire. Students will explore and understand new-technology practices across the whole spectrum of scholarly disciplines. This innovative curriculum will be extremely attractive and competitive. There were sixty-two applications for the first year of the UC Santa Cruz Ph.D. in Film and Digital Media, and the UC Santa Cruz program has a narrower focus than ETMAP. Due to our deeper and broader interests, we anticipate equal or greater interest among potential students. Similar programs in other departments such as the film and digital media program at the University of California, Santa Cruz have experienced a healthy applicant pool for a terminal degree averaging at 50 applicants for an average of 5 total enrollments per year.

#### **DUPLICATION**

This PhD program is unique in the state of Colorado. Programs outside the state that combine both theory and practice include: The University of Southern California, which offers a Media Arts and Practice PhD, Arizona State University, which offers a Transdisciplinary Graduate Education in Media Arts and Sciences, and the University of California San Diego, which offers a PhD Concentration in Art Practice. Those programs that emphasize interdisciplinary studies include and the arts: The University of Regina, which offers Interdisciplinary Studies in Fine Arts; The University of North Texas, which offers Interdisciplinary Art and Design Studies; University of Missouri-Kansas City, which offers a PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies; New York University, which offers a PhD in Media Culture and Communication; Bauhaus- University at Weimar-Germany which offers an interdisciplinary PhD in Art and Design, Fine Art and Media Art; and the Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies at Duke University, which offers an Interdisciplinary PhD in the History of Art. However, the CU approach is unique in its comprehensive treatment of emergent technologies and media arts practices.